

A-Z for Italian AB/Italian B: an independent teacher review

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By Beatrice Parolin

ISBN 978-1-7394670-0-5

In a landscape where high-quality resources for Italian remain comparatively limited, Dr Parolin's book stands out as an exceptional contribution and a real gem.

While the selection of material mirrors the IB syllabus in terms of themes, it does not do so passively. Instead, it actively engages with the material, interrogating the syllabus according to students' needs and their progression in learning. There is a clear pedagogical rationale underpinning the format of the book, and Dr Parolin's expertise is evident throughout. This thoughtful approach makes the book not only an excellent tool for revision and IB exam preparation, but also a resource that carefully supports students' learning curve over time.

I have started using the book with my own students, who respond very positively to it. They appreciate the sense that Italian is both recognised and valued within the IB framework, but above all they value the structured vocabulary, the model sentences that illustrate sophisticated language use, and the inclusion of idiomatic expressions. These are not artificial examples, but real Italian — the kind of language Italophones would use in authentic contexts, which is precisely what the IB aims to promote.

While the vocabulary coverage is extensive, it is carefully curated to prioritise relevance and practical usability. The sections are clearly organised and firmly rooted in the IB core themes, helping students see how language connects to ideas, arguments and cultural discussion. This makes the book particularly effective in supporting the transition from transactional Italian to more analytical and expressive language.

The introductory section provides a clear explanation of the structure of the IB examination and effectively guides students across Italian *ab initio*, SL and HL. The distinction between levels is consistently maintained, and the assessment rubric is clearly signposted throughout the book. Colour-coded and useful remarks make key information easy to identify and support independent study.

The division into topics and subtopics, supported by real-life example sentences, offers students linguistic structures with which they can engage and reuse as models. Particularly useful are the indications of vocabulary level and grade, distinguishing between basic and more advanced language, which allows students to personalise their learning.

The final section provides a valuable revision of core Italian, including numbers, greetings, seasons and everyday materials, alongside essential vocabulary targeted at the different exam papers. The speaking unit shows clear progression: for SL, picture description develops from observation (“what”, “who”, “where”) to expressing and reporting opinions, while HL students are guided in presenting and analysing a literary extract, with attention to variation in language, syntax and grammar. The writing section supports students across text types with appropriate vocabulary and tone, and the book concludes with a well-chosen list of connectors, illustrated through clear examples.

The author’s deep familiarity with IB Italian pedagogy is evident throughout, resulting in a resource that is carefully conceived, pedagogically rigorous and highly effective. It is of clear value not only to students preparing for the IB examinations, but also to teachers seeking a coherent, reliable and thoughtfully structured course companion.

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